

COVER LETTERS

A cover letter introduces you and your qualifications to prospective employers. Next to your resume, the cover letter is the most important document in your job search. Contact the career development office for assistance in creating and perfecting your cover letter.

Cover letters should answer the following questions:

- What position are you seeking, and how did you hear about the position?
- Why are you interested in the position and organization?
- What skills or attributes do you bring?
- What specific skills / knowledge / experiences make you a good match for the position?

Cover Letter Checklist

- Personalize each letter to the position and organization. If you do not know the name of the person to whom your letter should be addressed, call the organization and ask the receptionist.
- Use paper, font style and font size to match your resume.
- Keep the letter short. Three to five paragraphs on one page will help hold the employer's interest.
- Explain how you can fill the company's needs, not what the company can do for you.
- Vary your sentence structures (i.e., don't start all of your sentences with "I").
- Do not close the letter without identifying what you will do next. Request an interview. Show initiative by offering to call.
- Sign the letter and keep copies of all correspondence.
- Proofread. Bring your letter to the career development office to have someone else proofread it.
- If you are sending the resume and cover letter by e-mail, you can either attach both the cover letter and resume to the e-mail, or you can treat the body of the e-mail as your cover letter. Delete the address block, and keep the letter brief and professional. You do not need to sign e-mailed cover letters.

Cover Letter Outline

First Paragraph

- State the reason for writing
- Name the specific position or type of work for which you are applying
- Indicate from which resource (career development office, website, personal contact, etc.) you learned of the opening

Middle Paragraph(s)

- Highlight related experience, education and activities
- Use specific examples to emphasize accomplishments and relevant skills
- Present a direct match between your qualifications and the job description requirements

Closing Paragraph

- Reiterate that you are a strong or qualified candidate for the position
- Refer to your enclosed resume if you have not already
- Indicate your interest in an interview
- Include a statement expressing your appreciation for the employer's time and consideration

SAMPLE COVER LETTER

3201 Burton Street SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49546

May 30, 2011

Mr. Philip Carter, Manager of Human Resources
Carter Industries, Inc.
1882 Orange Street
Coulee, WI 50000

Dear Mr. Carter:

Please accept the attached resume for the systems analyst position that was advertised on Calvin College's online job posting system. My education and experience have prepared me to succeed in this position.

I recently graduated from Calvin College with a major in economics and a minor in computer science. My course work in these majors strengthened my skills using a wide variety of software programs and applications. Experience in my college's computer center as a programmer and student consultant gave me valuable exposure to complex computer operations. Additionally, I worked as an intern in computing operations for a large bank where I gained knowledge of financial systems. These experiences, coupled with my strong analytical and quantitative skills, make me an excellent candidate for your position.

I will contact you within seven days to further discuss this position and the possibility of an interview. If you have any questions, please contact me at (616) 526-4444 or jelgar@gmail.com. Thank you in advance for your consideration of my qualifications.

Sincerely,

[handwritten signature if submitting a hard copy]

Jim Elgar

SAMPLE COVER LETTER

Adding bullet points or other formatting features is acceptable if you want to change the visual appearance of your letter. The letter below includes bullet points to make it easier for an employer to quickly skim.

April 21, 2011

Forest View Hospital
1055 Medical Park Dr. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49546

To Whom It May Concern:

Please consider the attached resume for the case manager position that was advertised in *The Grand Rapids Press*. The position is a good fit with my education, experience and career interests, and your agency comes very highly recommended to me by your staff and community partners.

The case manager position requires strong interpersonal skills, direct counseling experience, a background with motivational interviewing, and the ability to work effectively and efficiently as a team member. Several opportunities and experiences have prepared me to excel in these areas:

- As a social work intern in an urban hospice agency in downtown Chicago, I have experience establishing rapport with, counseling and supporting bereaved families and individuals through their grief process using cognitive behavioral therapy and a task-centered approach. Many of my clientele also suffer from severe and persistent mental illness and/or substance abuse.
- I am a former student and facilitator of an interviewing and basic counseling course for upper-level social work majors at Calvin College that focuses on empathic listening and a non-judgmental frame of reference. The framework of the course is based upon the strengths-perspective and utilizes solution-focused techniques.
- I have four years of experience working as a productive, organized, responsible and valuable member in a teamwork setting.

These experiences, combined with my passion and commitment to enhancing and improving the psychiatric well-being for individuals with severe and persistent mental illnesses, make me an excellent candidate for your position at Forest View.

I look forward to the possibility of an interview. I will contact you within the next week to follow up. Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

[handwritten signature if submitting a hard copy]

Leslie Brown

SAMPLE COVER LETTER

2200 Meadowbrook St. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49546

March 23, 2011

Ms. Michelle DeHaan
Cascade Township Library
2870 Jack Smith Ave. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49546

Dear Ms. DeHaan:

I am writing to express my interest in the Youth Services Librarian position at Cascade Township Library, which I heard about from a library employee, Cheryl Jones. My experience and education make me an excellent candidate for this position.

My past work experience, in both private and public libraries, has given me the knowledge required to succeed in your position. Working at Calvin College's Hekman Library for the past four years, I have become adept at assisting patrons who have requests and questions. In addition, my volunteer work in various branches of the Kent District Library system has prepared me to navigate myself efficiently in library settings. I have enjoyed serving my community and enriching the lives of others with the plethora of library materials available, and I hope to be able to do this at Cascade Township Library as well.

With a bachelor's degree in English, my educational background also fits well with this position. Not only do I have effective oral and written communication skills, but I also have strong knowledge of literature after earning a bachelor's degree in English from Calvin College. I have extensive experience working successfully with computers, and I am comfortable with and quick at learning new computer programs.

I look forward to further discussing this position with you and how I can contribute my skills and experiences to Cascade Township Library. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

[handwritten signature if submitting a hard copy]

Kathleen Johnson
616.555.1234
kjohnson@gmail.com